



**Wyoming Department
of Environmental Quality**

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NEWS RELEASE

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Wyoming resident is lucky after fall in Abandoned Mine

Cheyenne, WY –Last month, a Wyoming resident got a graphic lesson in the dangers associated with abandoned mine sites.

The individual fell 35 feet down a hard rock shaft into about five feet of water. After several hours in the mine shaft, he was safely rescued by emergency personnel from Warren Air Force Base, and suffered only minor injuries

The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Division of the Department of Environmental Quality was aware of the site and had plans for reclaiming this site and several other hazardous mine openings in the area.

"We knew about of the site and had inspected the area within the last few weeks. It was on our inventory and was incorporated in an existing design contract," said Evan Green, administrator for the program. "However, due to limitations on funding and personnel, we were unable to reclaim this site prior to the recent incident," said Green.

Green said the individual was extremely lucky.

"He had a friend with him who walked out to report the incident. The water at the bottom of the shaft broke his fall. He was not knocked unconscious on the way down and so didn't drown. He was able to perch on a ledge above the water, so the hypothermia risk was limited. There were no snakes or toxic gases in the shaft. And there were rescue professionals available who put their own lives at risk to get him out," said Green.

According to Green, his division has inventoried over 3400 mine related hazards at abandoned mine sites in Wyoming that need to be reclaimed. AML initiates construction work on an average 10 to 15 projects per year. Each project site may have multiple hazardous features such as shafts, mine tunnels, unstable buildings or equipment, highwalls or pit lakes that can claim the unwary. AML currently has over \$15 million in projects under construction, about average for the division's annual work load.

Green has a suggestion to those who may want to explore an abandoned mine site. "These old mines are extremely dangerous. Hidden shafts may be hundreds of feet deep. Mine tunnels may contain toxic gases. If you know of or find a site, report it, stay out, and you'll stay alive," said Green.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration, 23 persons died in abandoned mines this year in the U.S.

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